

VZCZCXYZ0250  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHQT #0488/01 1562334  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 042334Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 7573  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 3915  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0762  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3042  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JUN LIMA 2621  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3579  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAHQA/OSAF WASHDC  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8966  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

S E C R E T QUITO 000488

NOFORN  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2014  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [SNAR](#) [PTER](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [OVIP](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SOUTHCOM COMMANDER VISIT TO QUITO

REF: A. QUITO 288  
    B. QUITO 312  
    C. QUITO 433  
    D. QUITO 331  
    E. QUITO 358  
    F. 07 QUITO 2570  
    G. QUITO 330  
    H. 07 QUITO 953  
    I. 07 QUITO 2556  
    J. 07 QUITO 2616

Classified By: Ambassador Linda Jewell for Reasons 1.4 (b&d)

1. (C) Please accept a warm welcome on your first visit to Ecuador on June 9-12. Your visit comes at a time of opportunities, risks and change as Ecuador carries out political and economic reforms through its Constituent Assembly. It is also a time of significant change in military leadership. While the Correa government clearly presents some concerns and uncertainties, cooperation on counter-narcotics and Northern Border security has in fact been very good to date. With the fairly recent changes in the Ministry of Defense and Joint Command and continued mixed signal rhetoric by the Correa administration, we are still not certain how the new leadership will choose to pursue and define long-term security cooperation. Privately, the Defense Minister told us that existing cooperation will continue, and relations at the unit level remain very good. The signing of the military exercise diplomatic note last week is a positive sign. There is no doubt that the GOE wants to reduce dependence on the USG, and broaden Ecuador's security partnership with regional players such as Brazil and Chile. But we believe that prospects remain solid for a significant partnership role for the U.S. I am convinced that dialogue with the MOD will maximize our prospects for continuing constructive bilateral military cooperation to our mutual benefit. Our objective during your visit is to demonstrate U.S. interest in advancing relations with the Correa government on issues of mutual interest.

Fragile Democracy, Correa's Commitment to Change  
-----

2. (C) Ecuador is a fragile democracy caught in a cycle of political instability, reflecting popular disillusionment with the traditional power structure and weak institutions. Inaugurated in January 2007, Rafael Correa is the first president since the 1979 return to democracy to enjoy

sustained popularity in all regions of the country and among a broad array of class and demographic groups. Correa won the presidential election by successfully presenting himself as the "change" candidate to a population frustrated by the chaotic and corrupt governments of recent years.

13. (C) Thus far, Correa has proven adept at maintaining public support using a combination of confrontational tactics, pragmatic deal-making, and programs to assist the poor. He is seeking adoption of reforms through an unbounded Constituent Assembly, inaugurated on November 29. The Assembly is rewriting the constitution, which would be approved in a subsequent referendum, likely in September. It suspended the Congress and is adopting laws that take effect immediately. If the new constitution is approved, general elections are likely to follow in early 2009.

14. (C) While Correa is undoubtedly sympathetic to some of Chavez's ideas, Correa's policies reflect primarily Ecuadorian realities and dynamics. He is a nationalist first, and a leftist second. He chafes at Ecuador's traditional dependency on the U.S., and his anger at our strong support